




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE DATA
AND INFORMATION SERVICE
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

AUG -9 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: NOAA Satellite and Information Service All Hands

FROM: Charles T. Wooldridge 
Chief of Staff for
Satellite and Information Services

SUBJECT: Country Clearance Violations

By federal law, all U.S. Government employees and contractors traveling overseas on official Government business must inform U.S. Embassy and post officers abroad of travelers' proposed presence in a foreign country. I would like to remind you that it is just as important that the Embassies are aware of any cancellations of travel plans. If a traveler cancels with sufficient lead time, at least 3 days prior to travel, please notify the NESDIS International Affairs office via email at NESDIS.Clearances@noaa.gov. Otherwise the traveler must contact the Embassy directly.

For your information, I have attached a memo provided by William Brennan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs stressing the importance of this situation. I am asking all Office Directors to please discuss and implement these procedures to your office staff members.

Attachment





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Deputy Assistant Secretary
for International Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20230

June 1, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Administrator
FROM: William J. Brennan, Ph.D.
SUBJECT: Country Clearance Violation

Last week my office was notified by the State Department of a Country Clearance violation by NOAA, in this instance involving the American Embassy in Jakarta and the second time within a two month period that NOAA has violated country clearance procedures at this embassy. This most recent instance was particularly troubling because it occurred coincident to receipt of a security threat against the embassy that led to the embassy's closure and to much concern on their part for the safety of a NOAA employee.

There are a number of reasons why the State Department requires embassy clearance for official travel to a foreign country including the safety of the traveler in situations such as political unrest and health emergencies. I have made a commitment to our ambassador in Indonesia that steps are being taken to ensure that that all NOAA employees adhere to country clearance procedures in the future. To this end, I am presently exploring a more rigorous means of ensuring compliance and I intend to seek your input.

In the meantime, I ask that you assist me in ensuring that all those within your organization who are responsible for approving or processing foreign travel, as well as those who are engaged in foreign travel, are aware of NOAA's country clearance procedures. For your information and assistance, I have attached a copy of NOAA's travel Regulations concerning country clearance cables, a copy of an April 2004 memo I sent to the International Affairs Council concerning lapses in country clearance procedures, a copy of the cable received from the Jakarta Embassy, and a copy of my letter to Ambassador Pascoe.

Attachments



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PART 306-4—Country Clearance Cables

Sec.

- 306-4.1 What are country clearance cables?
- 306-4.2 Why is there a need to prepare country clearance cables?
- 306-4.3 When is a country clearance cable prepared?
- 306-4.4 Who prepares country clearance cables?
- 306-4.5 What are the lead-time requirements for processing country clearance cables?
- 306-4.6 What information is required for a country clearance cable?

306-4.1 What are country clearance cables?

Cables (or telegrams) are a means of communication within the foreign diplomatic network. Country clearance cables notify the Department of State officials in Washington, D.C., and embassy and post officers abroad, of a traveler's presence in a foreign country.

306-4.2 Why is there a need to prepare country clearance cables?

- 1) Department of State policy. Department of State policy requires embassy clearance for official travel to a foreign country;
- 2) Embassy information. Consular offices are required to know about all scientific activities conducted during official foreign travel. In some cases, the embassy will provide a contact at the embassy for the traveler. The embassy may request a meeting or report from the traveler;
- 3) Traveler safety. For travelers who have received country clearance, Department of State will provide assistance in situations including, but not limited to, political unrest, health emergencies, and crime;
- 4) Traveler's convenience. Travelers can receive consular assistance for lost or stolen passports as well as general assistance with hotel accommodations; etc...
- 5) Potential for clearance to be refused. The embassy may have knowledge of reasons or situations which would prohibit the visit during the proposed period, and may therefore refuse to provide clearance. In such cases, travelers would reschedule the visit to accommodate embassy recommendations.

306-4.3 When is a country clearance cable prepared?

Country clearance cables are prepared for all foreign travel by Federal employees. Country clearance cables may be necessary for invitational travelers. Contact the International Activities Office within your Line/Staff Office for more information.

306-4.4 Who prepares country clearance cables?

The International Activities Office in your Line Office is required to prepare all country clearance cables. Each Staff Office within the Office of the Administrator is required to prepare all country clearance cables with the assistance, when needed, of the Office of International Affairs.

306-4.5 What are the lead-time requirements for processing country clearance cables?

At least 4-weeks lead-time is required for processing country clearance cables. Contact your servicing International Activities Office immediately if 4 weeks lead-time is not possible.

306-4.6 What information is required for a country clearance cable?

- 1) Traveler's name, title, and affiliation;
- 2) Purpose of travel - Include names of workshops/meetings and titles of all papers and presentations. Include names of institutional affiliations, and spell out acronyms;
- 3) Travel destination and general schedule. If possible, specify dates in each city within each country;
- 4) A contact name in the foreign country, name of the inviting office, and phone numbers; and
- 5) Indication of whether embassy assistance is requested. In most cases, there is no need to ask for embassy assistance and a simple closing paragraph that states that "no embassy assistance is requested" will suffice. However, if required (usually for high-level officials), the cable should be clear and specific about what is needed. The traveler should be aware that there may be an embassy charge for some services. Please note: Contact your Line or Staff Office for other internal requirements.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Deputy Assistant Secretary
for International Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20230

April 19, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: NOAA International Affairs Council

FROM: Dr. William J. Brennan 

SUBJECT: Country Clearance Requests

It has come to my attention that there have been some lapses in NOAA's country clearance requests in terms of timeliness, internal clearances and content. I would like to remind everyone that NOAA travelers are required to submit country clearance requests by cable 4 weeks before the date of travel. Prior to sending the request, the cable must be cleared by the appropriate desk officer or officers at the State Department. In some cases, this is only a country desk officer and in other cases, it must also include the Bureau of International Organizations (IO) officer with responsibility for the international organization involved. In particular, the U.S. Mission to UNESCO and the IO officer involved are extremely sensitive to appropriate notification and internal clearance for requests, because of the recent U.S. reentry.

Additionally, please be aware that outgoing cables requesting clearance do not necessarily constitute clearance; in some cases the traveler must receive a return cable granting clearance before travel. We have had some clearance requests rejected for improper consultations, addresses and notice prior to travel. Therefore, it is essential to keep the embassies and missions appropriately informed of our travel and I request your diligence in this matter.



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